

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



9 September 2024

Margaret Sanderson
Executive Headteacher
St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Ampthill Road
Ryde
Isle of Wight
PO33 1LJ

Dear Mrs Sanderson

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 22 July 2024, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, governors and the local authority the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also held meetings with staff and pupils, visited lessons and considered curriculum planning, school improvement and safeguarding documentation. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

Main findings

You and the head of school joined this school shortly before the previous inspection. Since then, you have acted quickly and robustly to improve its provision. You have rightly identified the actions needed to address the next steps from the previous inspection

report. You have ensured that all staff understand the rationale for these actions and have built a team around you that fully supports the school's improvement journey. There is a real sense of everyone working together to achieve the same goal.

You have prioritised designing and implementing well-sequenced curriculums for English and mathematics. You recognise that, first and foremost, pupils must have every opportunity to achieve well in these subjects. You have worked hard to improve teachers' knowledge of how to teach these subjects effectively. You are confident that this work is already having an impact on pupils' success.

Furthermore, you have made strides in embedding the teaching of phonics and early reading. The school is clear that all pupils need to develop secure phonics knowledge as swiftly as possible. Phonics is taught using a consistent and well-structured approach. Generally, this is delivered securely, although there are still some inconsistencies in phonics teaching. When learning to read, pupils now read books that match their phonics knowledge. This means that they can practise reading with confidence and fluency. You have ensured that the weakest readers are identified quickly. Generally, weaker readers are supported well to catch up quickly. However, sometimes, staff do not completely understand the purpose of one-to-one reading support. When this is the case, pupils are not given sufficient time to apply their phonics knowledge and to practise reading. You are aware that all staff will benefit from additional, high-quality training to ensure that the teaching of reading is consistent across the school.

The school has high ambition for all pupils to learn a broad and balanced curriculum and achieve well. To help achieve this ambition, you have designed a carefully considered curriculum. This is at varying stages of development. For most subjects, the curriculum content is sequenced in a sensible order from Reception to Year 6. You have also given thought to how the Nursery curriculum feeds into this sequence. However, what children must learn in Nursery so that they develop the required prior knowledge and skills for their future learning is not yet completely clear. You have rightly recognised that this is something that the school needs to clarify.

You have made a strong start in identifying the important knowledge that pupils must learn in each subject. This work is well on its way. However, you are aware that further work is needed to refine the curriculum content in subjects other than English and mathematics. In many subjects, the curriculum content often lacks sufficient precision. Statements identifying what pupils must know are often very broad and, therefore, it is not always clear exactly what pupils must learn to be ready for their next steps. This can lead to pupils developing gaps in their understanding that make future learning more difficult. The school now needs to refine the curriculum so that it clarifies the precise knowledge and skills pupils must know and remember. This will ensure that pupils can make connections in their learning and deepen their understanding over time.

The school's work to develop staff's subject knowledge is well underway. You have made sensible and appropriate use of local subject networks and local authority support to build staff's expertise. You have also taken steps to develop leadership capacity across the

school, prioritising the development of the leaders for English and mathematics. However, you are committed to developing subject leaders' and staff's knowledge for all aspects of the curriculum. You have a clear and carefully considered plan of action to achieve this over the coming year.

Governors know the school well. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are working effectively with you to continue to improve the school. Systems for checking the impact of the school's work help to assure governors that the actions taken to improve provision are the right actions.

The school clearly recognises that the pace of improvement needs to be swift. However, you have also been mindful of staff's workload. You have introduced developments in a sensible order at a rate that does not overload staff. This has given them the chance to build their practice securely. This approach is already showing some impact on the quality of curriculum implementation across the school. You are very mindful of staff's workload and well-being. Staff appreciate the measures that have been put in place to support them to do their job well without unrealistic demands on their time or energy.

I am copying this letter to the chair of governors, the director of education for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for the Isle of Wight. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Keeling
His Majesty's Inspector